

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

Trichastoma shows that earlier workers have had difficulty separating the shortwing *Brachypteryx* from this babbler genus. *T. bicolor*, *T. rostratum macropterum*, *T. sepiarium*, *T. m. malaccense*, and *T. m. poligene* were all originally placed in the genus *Brachypteryx* by their describers. Thus even a wary ornithologist can be trapped. A further study of the generic limits of the genus *Trichastoma* is planned.

One final note on construction of names in the genus *Trichastoma*: Deignan has considered the genus name to be neuter, and has altered all modifying names accordingly. In order to bring the nomenclature of my A SYNOPSIS OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN into accord with Deignan, species no. 1166 (p.

322, 2nd ed.) should read: *Trichastoma tickelli assamense*, (not *assamensis*).

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SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION,
WASHINGTON, DC. 20560, U.S.A.
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S. DILLON RIPLEY

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13. SOME NOTES ON THE BREEDING OF THE COMMON BAYA (*PLOCEUS PHILIPPINUS*)

On 12th October 1969, HA while looking for duck and snipe (which were not found!) in a marsh along the Shil-Kalyan Road, Thana District, near Bombay, saw large flocks of Bayas (*Ploceus philippinus*) flying from one patch of grass (*Coix lachryma-jobi*) to another. In one place, two birds in female plumage were seen carrying grass. Closer examination revealed seven or eight nests in various early stages of construction spread over a distance

of about 20 yards in a patch of reeds 100 yards long and about 10 yards wide bordered by a knee-deep ditch of water along the side, where the nests were visible from outside. The nests were slung from one or two reed-stalks about 7 feet from the ground. They were not hung from a single point as are normal baya nests; the area of contact extended over three or four inches along the stalks. They also appeared to be of a coarser and looser texture.

None of them was complete. A male in breeding plumage which had settled a few feet from a nest was collected. This was found to be the Common Baya but, as there was no record of this species nesting in reeds, a mistake was suspected.

On 19th October HA returned to the place and saw at least two nests being attended to by birds in 'Female' plumage which appeared to be Common Bayas, but was unable to see or obtain any accompanying male in breeding plumage.

A third attempt was made about midday on 20th October by HA with the late Mr. D. E. Reuben on the way back from the opening of the Karnala Bird Sanctuary. Though there were bayas in the vicinity, none of them appeared to be interested in the nests and yet another visit was indicated at some other time of day.

On 6th November the place was visited again (with V.C.A.) intending to leave him there for a longer period if the owners could not be immediately identified. We got there about 7 a.m. Though we waited for some time, no weaver birds came near the nests and all

the grass of which the nests were made had dried up making it fairly certain that work had been discontinued. V.C.A. was quite certain that they could only have been made by the Common Baya. The nests were between ten and fourteen inches in length and two or three of them had been made as far as the bar, with no egg chamber even commenced. Most of them had bits of mud plastered on to the inner wall above the level of the bar.

It has now been accepted for some time that in the Common Baya, it is the male alone in breeding plumage that builds the nest, with the female only helping a little in the final stages. Young males are known to build 'doodling' nests (Sálim Ali JBNHS 34: 953). It is possible that the birds seen building were young males which were 'practising' among the reeds, presumably not acquiring a breeding plumage during the current season. Their breeding in reeds does not appear to have been recorded so far. If our conjecture is correct, this behaviour of immature birds possibly suggests that the species was originally a reed-builder?

75 ABDUL REHMAN STREET,
BOMBAY-400 003.

HUMAYUN ABDULALI

BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,
HORNBILL HOUSE,
SHAHEED BHAGAT SINGH ROAD,
BOMBAY-400 023,
March 1, 1983.

V. C. AMBEDKAR

14. FIRST INDIAN RECORD OF CHAFFINCH (*FRINGILLA COELEBS*)

During the afternoon of 4th December 1982 a female Chaffinch (*Fringilla coelebs*) was watched by a party of British Birdwatchers on

a visit to the Corbett National Park in Uttar Pradesh.

I first spotted the bird as it was mobbing a